

## ***Northwest Colorado Visiting Nurse Association***

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### **Local Susan E. Birch Joins National Advisory Committee on Rural Health**

**Steamboat Springs, CO**— Susan E. Birch, Executive Director of the Northwest Colorado Visiting Nurse Association, has been invited by Tommy G. Thompson, Secretary of Health and Human Services, to join the National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services of the Health Resources and Services Administration. The purpose of the committee is to advise the Secretary concerning the provision and financing of health care and human services in rural areas.

The committee is chaired by David M. Beasley of South Carolina and includes 21 members from across the United States, 16 rural health experts and five human services experts. Birch is considered a rural health expert and is the sole representative from Colorado in either category. Birch notes, "I am honored and excited about this opportunity. This appointment gives Colorado and the Western Region of the United States a direct voice on the national level."

Birch, who is currently a member of the 2002 Cohort Robert Wood Johnson Executive Nurse Fellows Program, is no stranger to the Washington, D.C. area. She was born and raised in the nations Capitol. Ironically, her role through the Northwest Colorado VNA as public health care provider has brought her back to the D.C. area. Birch adds, "I am honored to be spending time there on behalf of rural communities. Small communities such as those in Routt and Moffat counties offer their own set of opportunities and challenges. There is a balance to be reached and I hope to take steps closer to an achievable solution to rural community health needs."

Birch has served the Northwest Colorado VNA for the past ten years, where she has been instrumental in expanding programs. She is also a member of many state wide organizations such as the 14<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Nominations Commission, Home Care Association of Colorado, Colorado Association of Local Public Health Leaders, Colorado Public Health Nurses Association and the Caring for Colorado Foundation.

The National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services of the Health Resources and Services Administration meetings are to be held approximately three times per year and are open to the public. Birch's appointment will terminate in July of 2007.

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